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## MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT.

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RICHMOND, VA., April 18, 1863.

*To the House of Representatives :*

I herewith transmit a communication from the Secretary of War, in response to your resolution of the 4th instant, relative to the case of Surgeon J. E. Dixon, a prisoner at Johnson's island.

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

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## COMMUNICATION FROM THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA, }  
War Department, }  
Richmond, Va., April 14, 1863. }

His Excellency, the PRESIDENT :

SIR : In response to a resolution of the House of Representatives, passed on the 4th instant, I have the honor to submit a report from Robert Ould, Esq., agent of exchange, relative to the case of Surgeon J. E. Dixon, a prisoner at Johnson's island.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War.*

## REPORT OF ROBERT OULD.

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RICHMOND, Va., April 13th, 1863.

HON. JAS. A. SEDDON, *Secretary of War* :

Sir : In the matter of the resolution of the House of Representatives relating to Dr. Jos. E. Dixon, I have the honor to make the following report :

His case was brought specially to the attention of the Federal agent of exchange more than two months ago, and just as soon as the fact of his confinement came to my knowledge. The agent promised to enquire into the matter and effect his release. At a subsequent interview the agent stated that Surgeon Dixon was charged as being a spy, and had been and was held as such ; that after his unconditional release he was found at a place within Federal lines, not in the line of his proper route, and under circumstances calculated to excite suspicion. I represented to him the true state of the case, and I believe satisfied him that the suspicion was unjust. I was enabled to do this very fully from the information kindly furnished to me some time ago, by the Hon. Geo. W. Jones, Representative from Tennessee. I gave the Federal agent a memorandum explaining the whole matter, which he promised to use in the doctor's behalf. Since then no communication has passed between us relating to the subject. I have but little doubt, however, that the doctor will shortly be returned to his friends.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

RO. OULD,  
*Agent of exchange.*

## MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT.

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RICHMOND, Va., April 20, 1863.

*To the House of Representatives :*

I herewith transmit, for your information, a communication from the Secretary of War, in response to your resolution of January 24th, in reference to the exchange or release "of persons, who, taken from civil life, have been transported and confined beyond the limits of the Confederacy."

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

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## COMMUNICATION FROM THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

WAR DEPARTMENT, April 18, 1863.

*To the PRESIDENT of the Confederate States :*

SIR: In compliance with a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 24th January last, I have the honor to submit the report of the Hon. Robert Ould, agent of exchange of prisoners, "as to the steps that have been taken to procure the liberation and exchange of prisoners, who, taken from civil life have been transported and confined beyond the limits of the Confederate States," and whether any and what person so confined, at the instance of the government, have been set at liberty.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War.*

## REPORT OF ROBERT OULD.

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RICHMOND, April 14th, 1863.

HON. JAMES A. SEDDON, *Secretary of War* :

SIR : In the matter of the accompanying resolution of the House of Representatives, relating to citizen prisoners, I have the honor to make the following report :

The subject of the arrest and detention of civilians has been a matter of controversy between the Federal agent of exchange and myself, ever since the establishment of the cartel. I have again and again protested against such arrests as illegal and contrary to the usages of civilized warfare. At an early stage of the cartel, I urged the adoption of the following rule, to wit : " That peaceable, non combatant citizens of both the Confederate and United States, who are not connected with any military organization, should not be arrested by either the Confederate or United States army within the territory of the adverse party ; that, if such a proposition was considered as being too broad, let the only exception be in the case of a temporary arrest of parties within army lines, where the arresting party has good reason to believe that their presence is dangerous to the safety of the army from the opportunity afforded of giving intelligence to the enemy ; that then the arrest should cease as soon as the reason for making it ceased in the withdrawal of the army, or for any other cause ; and, finally, that the foregoing proposal should apply to, and include such, arrests and imprisonments as were then in force "

The proposition was declined. I have urged it frequently since, but without success.

The Federal authorities, on the other hand, have always been anxious to institute a system of exchange of political prisoners, man for man. It was a deeply laid scheme to interfere with the administration of justice in the Confederate States, and to give practical immunity to such of their friends and partizans in the South, as felt disposed to preach or practise disloyalty. Under the instructions of the War Department, I have constantly refused to engage in any such system of exchanges. There was no reciprocity in the arrangement. It amounted to an exchange of Confederate citizens for Confederate citizens, owing to the fact that the enemy was in possession of portions of our own country, and had therefore more frequent opportunities of making arrests. If any such proposal had been accepted, we should soon have released every civilian held by us, leaving many

hundreds of our own people to languish in northern prisons, for whom we had no equivalent to offer, I repeatedly offered to release *all* political prisoners held by us, except such as were held upon very aggravated charges, if the Federal authorities would do the same. Lately they agreed to this proposition, coupling it with a written statement that it was not their intention to make any more arrests of non-combatants. I had very great doubts as to their good faith both as to the delivery of all political prisoners and their disavowal of any intention to make any more arrests. The sequel has proved that those doubts in both respects were well founded. A few weeks ago, in pretended compliance with the agreement, they delivered some six hundred persons whom they called political prisoners. About one half of that number were persons who had been in our service in the West, belonging to irregular military organizations, and who, long ago, had been declared exchanged under the agreement made between the Federal agent and myself. Finding they could not get any equivalent for them as military prisoners, they attempted to palm them off as political prisoners. The false pretence was too apparent to deceive anybody. Some political prisoners held in this city, against whom the charges were not aggravated, were sent off in return. The number delivered by me bore about the same proportion to the whole number held by us, as the number delivered by the Federal agent did to all the political prisoners held by the Federal authorities. They were not exchanged one against the other. They were simply released upon both sides, discharged from any paroles heretofore given by them. The Federal agent demanded that I should deliver to him political prisoners equal in number to those released by him. I refused to do so, as the agreement was for the release of all political prisoners, and it was necessary that the proper proportion should be maintained on our side to secure the release of the hundreds still held in captivity at the North. If all our prisoners had been delivered, I am very sure no more deliveries would have been made by the Federal agent.

Even less faith has been shown by the Federal authorities in the matter of political arrests. Since the date of their declaration, they have made more of such arrests than during any other equal space of time, embracing an unusual proportion of old men and helpless women.

The resolution of the House of Representatives specifically inquires, "what steps, if any, have been taken to procure the liberation of persons, who, taken from civil life, have been transported and confined beyond the limits of the Confederacy." In answer, I respectfully state that at every interview, without exception, between the Federal agent and myself, I have, under the instruction of the War Department, brought the subject to his attention in as forcible and as earnest manner as possible—that I have demanded the release of all civilians held in confinement, and have threatened retaliation. In addition, whenever I have been specifically informed of cases of incarceration, I have made them the subjects of correspondence with the Federal agent. In many cases I have been successful in procuring the release

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of the parties named—in others I have not succeeded. Some have been released at the North, and allowed to make their way to their own homes, and others have been brought on flag of truce boats to Varina and City Point. Some have been discharged unconditionally, and others put on parole. With reference to the latter class, all such have been relieved from any obligation contained in the parole, whether it was to return at a certain time, to secure the release of another person, or any other obligation.

Some nine hundred so called political prisoners have been received by me at Varina and City Point. About five or six hundred were really non-combatants.

I have no means of knowing how many have been allowed to make their way to their own homes. Such parties do not report to me. They amount, however, to several hundreds. I have only a record of the names of such as were delivered at Varina and City Point and Vicksburg. Only a very few have been delivered at the latter place. If it be the pleasure of the House of Representatives that the names of all such be presented, I will cause them to be separated from the rolls.

I have delayed until the present time this report, because, until within a few days past, the whole subject was undetermined. I thought it, best, under the circumstances, to wait long enough to ascertain whether the Federal authorities intended to carry out their agreement. I am now fully satisfied they have no such purpose.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

RO. OULD,  
*Agent of Exchange.*

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